

Mark 4:35-41, Romans 1:1-6 – Who is this man?

If someone asked you what a typical day in your life is, I wonder how you would answer? Perhaps you don't have one, perhaps you're a creature of habit. Googled this theme and here's some facts and figures about a typical day in the life of a Brit:

- Average Brit caught on surveillance camera 300 times a day
- If you're a London commuter who drives to work you'll spend 82 hours per year stuck in traffic jams – or 21 minutes per working day. In fact average commute across Britain is nearly 40 mins each way – 75 mins of your day just in getting to and from work.
- Survey last year – average Brit spends 8hrs 41 mins on media devices and 8 hrs 21 mins sleep

Why am I talking about average days, or what a day in your life looks like? Well, our gospel reading describes first part of day in life of Jesus – a typical day in Jesus' ministry – turn to page 1006 and let's follow it:

24 hour period begins one evening as Jesus leaves his home region to cross the Sea of Galilee overnight – storm arises and Jesus calms it.

With storm, probably took all night (why Jesus sleeping) arrive on East Side of lake early morning where Jesus immediately encounters the demon-possessed man – 5:2 'when Jesus got out of the boat...'

Dramatic encounter, scared the locals who immediately asked Jesus to leave (v17) – which he did and crosses straight back to West side of lake – presumably quiet crossing as enough time for him to arrive and begin teaching – prob late afternoon.

Another encounter, this time with local synagogue ruler, Jairus, who pleads for help with his sick daughter – v22-24.

Along the way, healed the woman with internal bleeding – not just physical healing, but emotional restoration (that's why stopped) – integrated into community – v34

And then went on (presumably early evening) to Jairus house, where raised his daughter from the dead – v41.

A day in the life of Jesus – 24 hours. Now we don't know if this was a typical day in his public ministry – was he always that busy? But not surprising if was, seemed to be in demand the whole time.

But Mark is making a point – one day, 4 encounters, 4 different challenges. And 4 ways of answering the same question, the one posed by the disciples in v41 of our reading: **who is this? Who is this man?**

What Jesus shows in this day in his life is that he has power over the only 4 things that humans can't control: the natural world, especially its unpredictable outcomes; the spiritual world i.e. demons and the supernatural; sickness and death. Each time Jesus confronts the problem and *each time* he has authority: he stills the storm, he drives out the demons, he heals the sickness spontaneously and he even raises a dead girl to life.

Who is this man? Why does he have so much power? That is the question Mark is forcing us to confront. Just who is Jesus? It's the main theme of his gospel – certainly the first half of it. People observe Jesus and wonder who he is:

- crowds in ch1 as he teaches and heals – 1:27 'what is this, a new teaching, and with authority!'
- Pharisees with their 4 questions in Mark 2, starting with the famous story of the paralysed man at the beginning of ch2, where they ask each other 'why does this fellow talk like that?'
- Then Jesus asks his disciples directly in ch8 – 'who do you say I am?'

Who is Jesus? Is he a teacher, is he a prophet, is he a king? Is he the Messiah? And the answer is yes, he's all of those. But that's not the whole story, is it? The real question, and this is what got everyone scratching their heads, is this: *is he more than that? Is he also God himself?*

That one question is one of the most important of all human history. The Christian faith really hinges on two fundamental questions: is Jesus the Son of God? And did he rise from the dead? If the answer to either of those is 'no' then we might as well not be here. Or as Paul says in 1 Corinthians: 'If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.'

And of course these 2 questions are connected. How does someone prove they are the Son of God?

Lots of evidence: what he taught, what he did, how he lived, how he seemed to fulfil promises made in the OT long ago – there's certainly never been a human being in history so perfect, so full of God, so full of life, as Jesus. But it's one thing to be full of God, it's another to be God himself.

Or we can look at his legacy. Book recently published by John Ortberg called 'Who is this man?' which looks at just that. Offers 8 unique legacies of Jesus, or the movement Jesus founded i.e. the church (Amazon £4.68 on kindle or £5.78 paper copy) – not time to do more than give you the headlines, if any of them pique your interest you'll have to buy the book or do some research to see if you agree. But in summary, they are:

- Jesus gave the world its most influential movement – the church
- Jesus changed how we think about history
- Jesus shaped how we express compassion
- The Jesus movement shaped education
- The Jesus movement revolutionised art
- The Jesus movement changed political theory
- Jesus changed how we think of human rights and dignity
- Jesus uniquely taught love of enemies

Quite something, isn't it? But not proof that Son of God. No, the real proof is in the resurrection.

Which takes us to the other reading, Romans 1, where Paul makes precisely this point: READ v4.

That's why Easter lies at the heart of our faith. It's not just that it means Jesus is alive. It's not just that it means he was telling the truth about the cross and what he was going to do for us. It's not even just that it guarantees the same eternal life for his followers – though it is all of those.

It's that it proves who he was. He was divine, he was God come to earth – and therefore everything else he said and did was true, the promises he makes are true, the life he offers is real, the forgiveness he offers is real – and, yes, the hope of heaven is real too.

Who is this man? Nothing less than the Son of God. Even the wind and waves obey him. Even the spirits obey him. Even the hem of his cloak heals people. Even the dead can come back to life. This is why we're here!

Alpha Course – asking this same question, and crucially you get the chance to hear more of the evidence, to question and interrogate it. So if you want that chance – get yourself along to CtK on Wed at 7.30pm. There's coffee and cake too – what's not to like?

But for us today, I want to draw a couple of conclusions for us as a worshipping community:

1. Jesus is someone to worship and not just admire. There are lots of admirable human beings – but Jesus is more than that. I'll go further – *we cannot admire Jesus without worshipping him*. And that has an appropriate sense of awe about it. When Peter cast his nets the other side and first saw Jesus for who he was, he fell on his knees. When Thomas saw the risen Jesus, he fell on his knees. When the people across the lake saw happened to the pigs, they were afraid and begged Jesus to leave. It wasn't worship as such – but it was awe.

Our worship needs an appropriate sense of awe. We're not just meeting together and singing songs and learning from the bible. We're here to worship the Creator of the universe, the one who raises the dead, calms the storm, the one who people who met him fell on their knees to worship. Dare I say it, it's meant to be a bit uncomfortable. Yes, we should look forward to coming to church, but there's no harm in sometimes having a few butterflies in the stomach. What is God going to do today? What's he going to say? What if he really showed up? I mean in a revival kind of way, where we saw those same kind of miracles today? I mean, why not? If Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever...??

As an aside, that also means challenging the idea that Jesus is just good teacher – very popular idea, and of course what he taught is unparalleled in its influence on human history. But anyone who claims to be the Son of God (or is comfortable with others making that claim about him) blows that idea out of the water. Quote CS Lewis.

Jesus must be worshipped and not just admired.

2. Finally, when was the last time we were really amazed by Jesus? Like the disciples, who cried out: 'who is this man?' Like, wow! Many of us have been Christians a long time. Easy to get comfortable with it – and with Jesus. We know the stories, we've heard the sermons, we know how this church thing works. Maybe some of us need to get back in that boat next to the disciples and get that tingle up our spine again and go 'wow – who is this guy?'

Point of this sermon series – 'back to basics'. Revisiting heart of faith. Can never do that too often. But also want to put a bit of sizzle back into your sausage. To see it all again with fresh eyes and go *wow – who is this guy?* This is the best news I ever heard. It's the real thing. It's what I signed up for. Or maybe if you wondering what you think, you might say: actually, yeah, I'm in with this. This Jesus is the real deal.

So let our hearts be stirred again. And may we say, like the disciples: 'Who is this man? Even the wind and waves obey him!'